

Testimony of

Shellye Davis, Paraprofessional

Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals, AFT Local 221

HB 5465 -- An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for

Certain Municipal Employees

Labor and Public Employees Committee

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Good Afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Shellye Davis and I am Co-President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals (HFP), AFT Local 221. As a collective bargaining unit, we represent Paraprofessionals who serve a diverse student population in the City of Hartford's School System. We are also 10-month employees who are not eligible for unemployment.

I would like to speak briefly today in favor of HB 5465, An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides select employees with up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid, employment protected leave per year. It also requires that their group medical benefits continue during the leave. FMLA, is designed to help employees balance both family and work responsibility. It also seeks to accommodate the legitimate interest of employers and while promoting equal employment opportunities for both men and women.

The HFT strongly supports this bill, and the need for our members to be covered by it. As professional public educational employees, it is imperative that we maintain a positive and focused environment for the children and families we serve, including our own. Our lives are parallel to our community; we are susceptible to the same issues confronted daily by all those striving to make a peaceful and responsible life for their loved ones and themselves. The anxiety and stress of welcoming a newborn into our family, caring for an ailing spouse, child or parent, or the recovery from an injury or serious health issue, should not have to be compounded by the fear of losing our employment and health benefits. The members of HFT are some of the most caring, creative and resourceful paraprofessionals (and people) in the country. The commitment and dedication of these men and women, who faithfully serve the Hartford School System, is unparalleled. They richly deserve to have the peace of mind in knowing their service to the community is important.

The triumphs and the tragedies that inevitably affect all lives should not be compounded by the taking one's livelihood. People need to be able to take care of themselves and their families. In the grander scheme of things, we all benefit from that. Please help us and I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and for this opportunity to testify before you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.